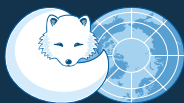
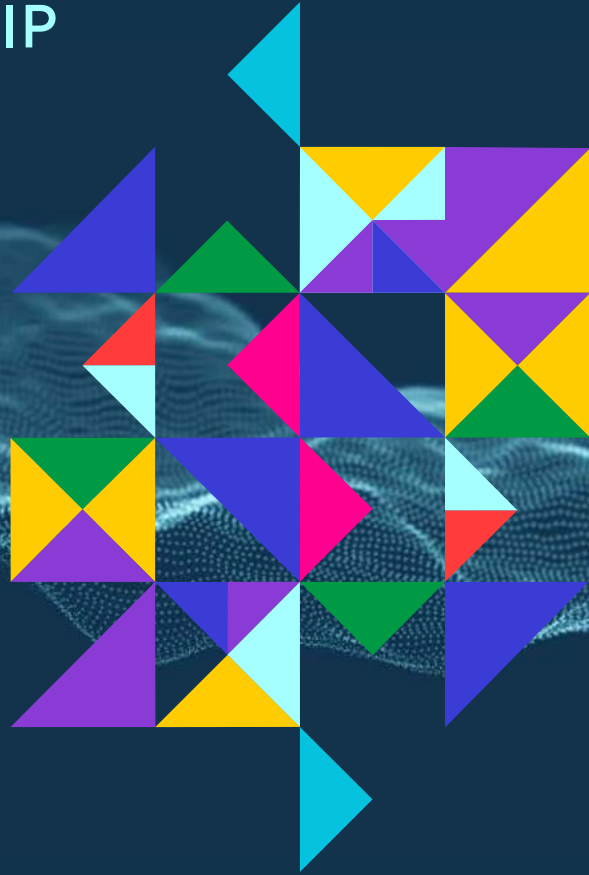
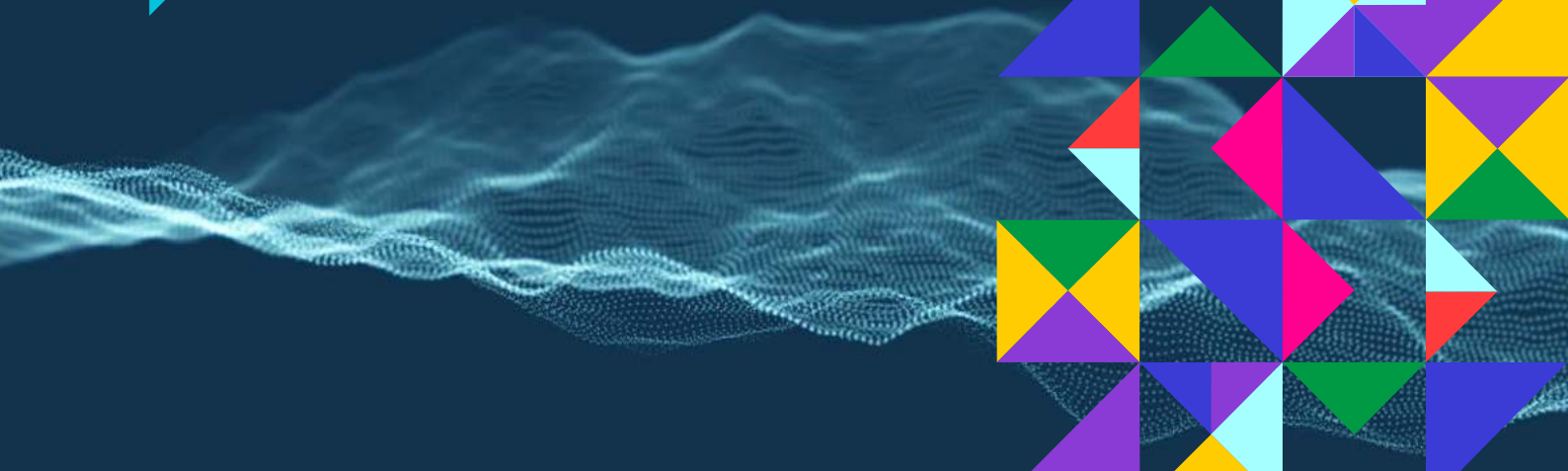


NORWAY'S CHAIRSHIP ARCTIC COUNCIL 2023-2025

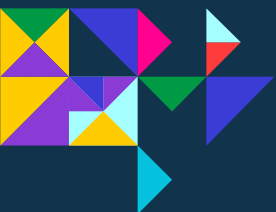


ARCTIC COUNCIL



The Arctic Council was established in 1996 to promote cooperation between Arctic states and peoples on matters of common interest in the region, including sustainable development and protection of the Arctic environment. This task is more important than ever before given the dramatic pace of climate change in the Arctic. It is the Arctic that is first experiencing the accelerating effects of global climate change. The temperature in the Arctic is now rising 3-4 times faster than the global average. This is already having major impacts on Arctic ecosystems and biodiversity, and is increasingly affecting Arctic communities and indigenous peoples as well. The changing Arctic climate also has major implications for global climate and weather patterns, not least for global sea level rise.

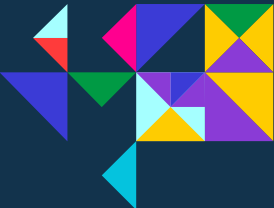

At a difficult and challenging time for international cooperation, when cooperation within the Arctic Council is also being affected, it is crucial to maintain our focus on long-term development trends in the Arctic. The region plays a key role for global climate systems and ecosystems. We must therefore not only do more to check the escalating temperatures, but also take steps to adapt to a changing climate and new opportunities and challenges, the full extent of which are still unknown. The Arctic Council's work on climate and environmental issues provides vital understanding and is an important element of international efforts in these fields.



Norway's Chairship of the Arctic Council

The Arctic Council is the leading intergovernmental forum for Arctic issues. The overall objective for Norway's chairship of the Council will be to promote stability and constructive cooperation. We will focus on the core issues the Council deals with, including impacts of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to enhance the well-being of people living in the region.


Norway will continue to support ongoing activities and projects run by the Council's six working groups and its expert groups. Our national priorities are based on the first Arctic Council Strategic Plan, which was adopted in Reykjavik in 2021. Through four priority topics: *the oceans*; *climate and environment*; *sustainable economic development*; and *people in the north*, we will continue to pursue the long-term approach taken by the Council in its important efforts to ensure a vibrant and sustainable Arctic region. A mid-term review of the Strategic Plan is to be carried out in 2025.



The development of the Arctic of the future is a process that is taking place every day within the region itself. *Arctic youth* and *Arctic indigenous peoples* will be cross-cutting priorities of the Norwegian chairship. We will seek to improve the opportunities young people in the region have to influence and participate in processes related to the work of the Arctic Council. We will also strengthen cooperation with the Arctic indigenous peoples' organisations, and stress the importance of the participation of indigenous peoples and their valuable contributions in all areas of cooperation under the Council.

Strengthening the scientific basis for management of the environment and activities in the Arctic is a cornerstone of the Arctic Council's work. Norway will continue to focus on this work. At the same time, we will take steps to highlight the importance of local and traditional knowledge and seek to incorporate such knowledge in the Council's work.

The four thematic priorities of Norway's chairship reflect long-term Norwegian priorities for the Arctic and for Norway's Arctic policy, which are founded on knowledge and the principles of responsible and sustainable management.





The Oceans

A combination of increasing activity, rapid climate change and loss of sea ice is putting growing pressure on the Arctic marine environment. To promote healthy and productive oceans and enhance the sustainability of Arctic ocean industries, Norway will continue to focus on integrated ocean management.

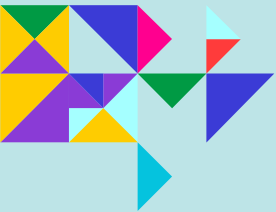
Norway will:

Develop tools for ocean management. We will further develop Arctic cooperation on management tools that can be adapted to climate change. We will also explore the possibility of developing a digital environmental atlas for Arctic seas and oceans, which would be an important tool for synthesising and analysing marine environmental data.

Protect ice-dependent species and ecosystems. We will take steps to facilitate better protection of ice-dependent species and ecosystems and closer cooperation on developing an Arctic network of marine protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures that can contribute to the conservation of marine biodiversity.

Organise an international conference on ecosystem-based ocean management. In order to share information on progress and experience in implementing ecosystem-based ocean management in the Arctic, Norway will organise an international conference on ecosystem-based ocean management during its chairship.





Develop Arctic observation systems. The Arctic states share a need to build up basic knowledge about the Arctic seas, including the central Arctic Ocean. Continued support for marine and polar research is essential for developing a well-informed, integrated and scientific management approach. Norway will therefore give priority to developing Arctic observation systems, and will take steps to facilitate more effective sharing of observations and research data.

Take action to combat marine litter. Norway will continue the long-term joint efforts to deal with marine litter and plastic pollution. During our chairship, we will strengthen Arctic cooperation on tackling marine litter, and follow up the 2021 Marine Litter Regional Action Plan by initiating cooperation projects.

Strengthen cooperation on emergency preparedness and safe shipping in the Arctic. The Arctic Ocean is becoming increasingly ice-free, resulting in a growing need to enhance emergency prevention, preparedness and response in the Arctic. The expansion of ocean-based activities in the north increases the risk of accidents that may have consequences for life, health and the environment. The remoteness of the region and the difficult weather conditions add to the challenges for emergency preparedness and search and rescue operations. During its chairship, Norway will strengthen Arctic cooperation on sustainable shipping and risk reduction measures in response to the growing volume of shipping in the Arctic. We will strengthen cooperation with the Arctic Coast Guard Forum, which will also be chaired by Norway in the same period. We will use concrete initiatives and exercises to further develop Arctic cooperation on aeronautical and maritime search and rescue, oil spill preparedness and response, dealing with radiological and nuclear contamination at sea, and health preparedness. We will also consider the possibility of holding an Arctic conference on emergency preparedness during our chairship.







Climate and environment

Climate change is particularly rapid in the Arctic. Changes in the Arctic have impacts at global level, and climate change is clearly the most serious threat to Arctic biodiversity. Action to limit greenhouse gas emissions globally is the most important way of safeguarding the Arctic environment. At the same time, climate change is creating major shared challenges for the Arctic states. These must be addressed both by acquiring up-to-date information on the changes that are occurring and by taking steps to limit their adverse environmental and social impacts.

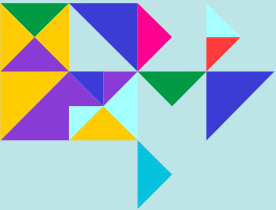
During the Norwegian chairship, we will focus on the impacts of climate change in the Arctic, the need to adapt the management regime to climate change, and action to deal with the environmental problems associated with expanding human activity. A shared, robust knowledge base is vital to deal with all these challenges, and Arctic cooperation is of crucial importance in finding good solutions.

Norway will:

Enhance knowledge about the Arctic climate and environment.

The long-term work on knowledge syntheses to provide insight into climate change, pollution and biodiversity in the Arctic must be continued, and we will seek to make this information readily available and encourage its use. Local and traditional knowledge constitutes an important element of this knowledge base.





Improve access to and use of research data. The Norwegian chairship will seek to improve access to and use of data from the Arctic Council by further developing a common data policy and tools. Moreover, we will support monitoring, research and decision-making processes in the Arctic through better access to user-friendly topographical data.

Strengthen cooperation on the conservation of Arctic biodiversity.

Norway will give priority to analyses of the impacts of climate change on Arctic biodiversity, in order to improve our common understanding of how the situation will change in the future and what action is needed. We wish to pave the way for closer cooperation on implementing conservation measures for Arctic biodiversity, which may be instrumental in achieving the goals and targets of the new global biodiversity framework under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

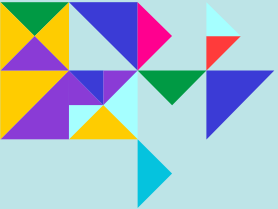
Focus particularly on black carbon and methane. During the Norwegian chairship, we will focus particularly on short-lived climate forcers such as black carbon (soot) and methane. Global reductions in emissions of black carbon and methane in the next few years will moderate the pace of warming in the Arctic in the period up to 2030. This can prevent the acceleration of climate change at global level caused by melting ice and thawing permafrost.

Support international climate action. Norway will be a strong advocate for the Arctic in multilateral forums with a focus on climate change. By raising awareness of the global impacts of climate change in the Arctic through the work of the Arctic Council, we can support the Paris Agreement and international climate action.





Sustainable economic development



During its chairship, Norway will highlight sustainable economic development as an essential basis for social development in the Arctic. The green transition, the blue economy, sustainable shipping and Arctic food systems will be special thematic priorities for the Norwegian chairship.

The rich natural resources of the Arctic are already playing a role in economic development and supporting dynamic communities. At the same time, the region has considerable potential for economic development in connection with the green transition, in particular because there are deposits of many of the minerals that will be needed to make the transition. It is vital to use resources sustainably and make sure that they are not exploited at the expense of traditional communities or in a way that has negative impacts on biodiversity. This will be a major responsibility for the Arctic states.

Norway will:

Update the report *The Economy of the North*. To promote economic sustainability in the Arctic, including social sustainability, the report will incorporate insights that can be used in striking a balance between and identifying potential synergies between sustainable development goals. Closer cooperation on the development of regional statistics on the economy, livelihoods and the environment, together with cooperation with indigenous peoples' organisations to build up the knowledge base on nature-based livelihoods and economic development, will be important elements of this work.



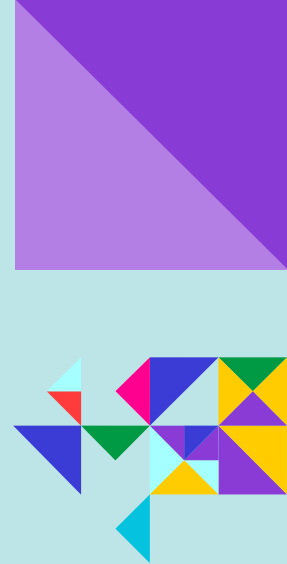
Support new initiatives to generate knowledge on how nature and traditional land use can be safeguarded during the green transition.

During its chairship, Norway will focus on how nature and traditional land use can be safeguarded during the green transition, for example when developing infrastructure for green energy, industry and transport. In particular, we will support initiatives that can yield new knowledge and solutions that protect and further develop the culture and way of life of indigenous peoples.

Support initiatives to promote greener Arctic shipping. The expansion of ocean-based activities in the north opens up new opportunities for growth and value creation. At the same time, there is a considerable potential for reducing emissions from international shipping. Norway will support existing initiatives to reduce the environmental footprint of Arctic shipping, and will explore opportunities to establish green shipping corridors in the Arctic as a pilot project.

Improve knowledge of how Arctic food systems are being influenced by climate change. Sustainable management of the natural resources of the Arctic is an essential basis for sustainable economic development. At the same time, climate change is influencing both the Arctic growing season and marine biological resources. Local food culture and the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples are of pivotal importance to sustainable economic development and adaptation to climate change at local level. Under its chairship, Norway will strengthen knowledge about Arctic food chains and value chains, with a particular emphasis on food systems. Developing the expertise of local young people will be an important element of this work.

Strengthen cooperation with the Arctic Economic Council. Through closer cooperation with the Arctic Economic Council, Norway will seek to strengthen economic cooperation in the Arctic and encourage sharing of best practices, new technological solutions and standards for Arctic industries.





People in the North

Global climate change is altering the framework for livelihoods, settlement patterns and living conditions for people living in the Arctic, often in new and different ways. Through its chairship of the Arctic Council, Norway will seek to develop resilient, diverse and inclusive Arctic communities that are attractive places to live in, for everyone.

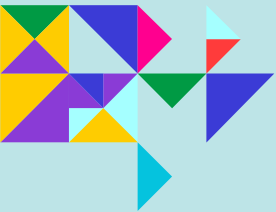
Norway will:

Focus particularly on young people, and organise an Arctic youth conference. We will take the initiative for and organise an Arctic youth conference. We will also take steps to enable young people in the Arctic to play a greater part in the Arctic Council's work and in determining its agenda. Closer cooperation with Arctic communities, for example through the Arctic Mayors' Forum, will be of crucial importance.

Continue work on gender equality and inclusion in the Arctic. Norway will seek to ensure the continuation of the Arctic Council's long-term work on gender, diversity and inclusion during its chairship. We will take practical initiatives to follow up the recommendations of the final report on gender equality in the Arctic.

Enhance Arctic health cooperation. Climate change has impacts on the natural environment, which in turn influences public health. Norway will therefore seek to enhance Arctic cooperation on public health.





We will investigate how climate change is affecting public health in the Arctic, and will work towards the establishment of a network of Arctic human biobanks to assess exposure to environmental contaminants in cooperation with other Arctic states. At the same time, we will continue and build up the existing cooperation on living conditions, digital health solutions, mental health and health preparedness in the Arctic. We will strengthen existing networks and increase knowledge-sharing in areas related to health and preventive measures in the Arctic.

Enhance medical preparedness. We will also seek closer Arctic cooperation to develop robust solutions for emergency medical preparedness in the event of major accidents in the region. We will strengthen the preparedness and response system for all types of emergencies in Arctic communities through projects that include local and traditional knowledge.

Enhance Arctic cooperation in the cultural field. Culture and creative industries are of vital importance for an Arctic sense of community, adding to value creation and making the region a more attractive place to live. However, culture is rarely on the agenda of the Arctic Council. We will therefore provide support for the Arctic Arts Summit, focusing particularly on strengthening networks of indigenous peoples and cooperation on the arts across Arctic indigenous peoples. Over time, the Summit has become an important platform for discussing challenges and opportunities in the cultural field that are shared by many Arctic communities, and has also provided a basis for developing new business activities.

Develop and update the Arctic cultural heritage assessment and expand the international exchange of information on the accelerating effects of climate change on the cultural environment in the Arctic.



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